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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/813,209	03/20/2001	Mineo Nozaki	01161/LH	1967

1933 7590 01/04/2006

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EXAMINER

TARAE, CATHERINE MICHELLE

ART UNIT

PAPER NUMBER

3623

DATE MAILED: 01/04/2006

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/813,209

Applicant(s)

NOZAKI ET AL.

Examiner

C. Michelle Tarae

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 10 October 2005.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1,3-17,19-23 and 25-38 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1,3-17,19-23 and 25-38 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
- ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 - ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 - ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- ☐ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- ☒ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date 10 October 2005.
- ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____.
- ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- ☐ Other: _____.

DETAILED ACTION

1. A request for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, including the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e), was filed in this application after final rejection. Since this application is eligible for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, and the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e) has been timely paid, the finality of the previous Office action has been withdrawn pursuant to 37 CFR 1.114. Applicant's submission filed on October 10, 2005 has been entered.

Claims 1, 3-5, 17, 19, 23 and 25-27 have been amended. Claims 2, 18 and 24 have been canceled. Claims 1, 3-17, 19-23 and 25-38 are now pending in this application.

Information Disclosure Statement

2. The examiner has reviewed the patents supplied in the Information Disclosure Statement (IDS) provided on October 10, 2005.

Response to Amendment

3. Applicant's amendments to claims 1, 3-5, 17, 19, 23 and 25-27 are acknowledged.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

4. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

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A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(e) the invention was described in (1) an application for patent, published under section 122(b), by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent or (2) a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent, except that an international application filed under the treaty defined in section 351(a) shall have the effects for purposes of this subsection of an application filed in the United States only if the international application designated the United States and was published under Article 21(2) of such treaty in the English language.

5. Claims 1, 3-7, 10, 11, 13, 14, 16, 17, 19-21, 23, 25-29, 32, 33, 35, 36 and 38 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Stier et al. (U.S. 6,591,258).

As per claim 1, Stier et al. discloses a technical support server comprising:

a service information portal section for providing web pages as information input and output interfaces (col. 6, lines 20-22; col. 10, lines 62-65; col. 12, lines 61-64; Figures 1a, 1c and 6-12; Technical support agents use a web-based interface to access the knowledge base.);

a knowledge base section for storing various claim reports and solutions which correspond to the claim reports and which are provided by an engineer who designs products in a product technology department (col. 11, lines 15-21 and 40-63; col. 23, lines 47-52; Agents, who are engineers, use the knowledge base to file and access claim reports and their solutions. Solutions are also provided by the engineers.); and

a claim handling section for registering a new claim report, corresponding to a new claim, in the knowledge base section, and managing the registered new claim report as an unsolved claim requiring an answer from the engineer (col. 11, lines 29-39; If the claim is unique, or indicated as not being in the knowledge base, then it is registered as a new claim requiring resolution.);

wherein claim content of the new claim report is input via a client web page in a format substantially similar to natural language (col. 14, lines 27-37; col. 15, lines 36-47; Knowledge object/record editor user interfaces are used to add new claims to the knowledge base.); and

wherein the claim handling section comprises a synonym table section for converting product unit information and problem information included in the claim content to standard terms (col. 15, lines 18-32; col. 24, lines 17-26; Figure 9; When a new claim is added or a current claim is edited, the user may convert the claim content associated with the claim, which describes the nature of the claim, into standard terms using synonyms so that the claim is described in a comprehensive fashion so that it can easily be searched in the knowledge base. Synonyms are provided to the user via a list in the editor interface. The synonyms are stored in the knowledge base as part of the claim records, which are also stored in the knowledge base.), and the claim handling section: (i) produces the new claim report in a format including at least a claim title structured as a combination of predetermined items of definition information expressed in the standard terms, based on the claim content in the format substantially similar to natural language, by using the synonym table section (col. 15, lines 18-32; col. 24, lines 17-26; Figure 9; The claim editor interface allows users to edit, or convert, claim names using a list of available synonyms. The names are created so that they are expressed in standard terms according to guidelines and are expressed using at least one synonym from the list of available synonyms.), (ii) searches the knowledge base section for claims similar to the new claim report (col. 11, lines 24-29 and 42-48; The knowledge

base is searched for similar claims and if a similar claim is found, the similar claims' solutions are accessed.), and (iii) registers the new claim report in the knowledge base section when it is confirmed that no claims similar to the new claim report are present in the knowledge base section (col. 11, lines 24-29 and 42-48; col. 44, line 48-col. 45, line 2; If it is confirmed that the claim report is unique (i.e., not found in the knowledge base), then the claim report is made available to knowledge authors, who are responsible for maintaining the knowledge base. Once the knowledge authors process the claim content and associates proper synonyms with the claim (i.e., converts the claim content into standard terms so that it can be searched in the database and minimizes claim redundancies), then the claim report is stored in the knowledge base.).

As per claim 3, Stier et al. discloses a technical support server according to claim 1, wherein the synonym table section has a synonym table for converting the information available from the claim content input to the client web page from a respective one of a plurality of different languages to common codes (col. 8, lines 65-col. 9, line 6; col. 9, lines 45-65; col. 15, lines 18-32; col. 23, lines 53-56; col. 24, lines 17-26; Figure 9; Synonyms are stored in records in the knowledge base and are used to standardize the format of the claims so as to maintain consistency among the claim content stored in the knowledge base and facilitate more effective searching of the knowledge base. A list of synonyms is retrieved from the knowledge base and provided to the user in the claim editor interface.).

As per claim 4, Stier et al. discloses a technical support server according to claim 1, wherein the claim handling section comprises an answer assisting module for when

the claim handling section identifies a solution to the new claim as a search result of the search of the knowledge base section, producing an answer based on the solution so as to meet a technical support policy varying from market region to market region (col. 9, lines 45-65; col. 24, lines 23-26; The system employs guidelines and conventions for the format and content of solutions in the knowledge base.).

As per claim 5, Stier et al. discloses a technical support server according to claim 1, wherein the claim handling section has a report assisting module for when the claim handling section does not identify a solution as a search result of the search of the knowledge base section, (i) automatically incorporating the information available from the claim content input to the client web page into new the claim report, and (ii) requesting input of additional information which is lacking from the claim content input to the client web page and which is necessary for a study the new claim by the engineer but is lacking (col. 11, lines 29-39 and 56-63; col. 12, lines 20-34; If a solution for a new claim is not found in the knowledge base, then claim information is incorporated into the knowledge base and made available for review to the knowledge base engineers and analysts.).

As per claim 6, Stier et al. discloses a technical support server according to claim 1, wherein the claim handling section assigns a supporting task for acquiring a solution to the new claim to a technical division responsible for the new claim, and to request the solution from the technical division (col. 49, lines 31-47; col. 50, lines 44-67; Knowledge analysts are assigned tasks to add new content/solutions to the knowledge base when agents activate the Knowledge Notes field.).

As per claim 7, Stier et al. discloses a technical support server according to claim 6, wherein the claim handling section attaches a backup document for backing up the supporting task to the new claim report (col. 49, lines 31-47; The Knowledge Notes fields allows agents to request content/solutions by attaching a report to their request.).

As per claim 10, Stier et al. discloses a technical support server according to claim 6, wherein the claim handling section is constructed to control a display of a state of progress of the supporting task (Figures 19-22).

As per claim 11, Stier et al. discloses a technical support server according to claim 1, wherein the claim handling section has a table for converting the claim content input to the client web page to a specific language (col. 6, lines 30-34; col. 9, lines 45-65; The system converts claim content into language with specific formatting and content so as to maintain consistency within the knowledge base.).

As per claim 13, Stier et al. discloses a technical support server according to claim 6, wherein the claim handling section selects an engineer to be in charge of the supporting task based on at least one of a schedule, a field in charge, experience, and a technical level of each engineer in a technical division to which the supporting task has been assigned (col. 49, lines 31-47; col. 50, lines 44-67; Knowledge analysts are assigned tasks to add new content/solutions to the knowledge base when agents activate the Knowledge Notes field.).

As per claim 14, Stier et al. discloses a technical support server according to claim 6, wherein, when the claim handling section does not identify a solution as a search result of the search of the knowledge base section, the claim handling section

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issues a notice explaining that the new claim is now being studied (col. 11, lines 29-39 and 56-63; col. 12, lines 20-34; If a solution for a new claim is not found in the knowledge base, then claim information is incorporated into the knowledge base and made available for review to the knowledge base engineers and analysts. The system issues a notice by setting the claim status to pending so that knowledge base engineers and analysts know to review the claim).

As per claim 16, Stier et al. discloses a technical support server according to claim 6, wherein the claim handling section produces an answer document in which a solution answered on an engineer web page is modified so as to meet a technical support policy which varies from market region to market region (col. 9, lines 28-40 and 45-65; col. 24, lines 23-26; Engineers use documents called facets to aid in the resolution of a claim, where a facet is an HTML document. The system employs guidelines and conventions for the format and content of solutions in the knowledge base.).

Claims 17, 19-21, 23, 25-29, 32, 33, 35, 36 and 38 recite substantially similar limitations to claims 1, 3-7, 10, 11, 13, 14 and 16 above. Therefore, claims 17, 19-21, 23, 25-29, 32, 33, 35, 36 and 38 are rejected on the same basis as claims 1, 3-7, 10, 11, 13, 14 and 16 above.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

6. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

7. Claims 8, 9, 12, 15, 22, 30, 31, 34 and 37 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Stier et al. (U.S. 6,591,258) as applied above.

As per claims 8 and 15, Stier et al. does not expressly disclose a technical support server according to claim 6, wherein the claim handling section sets a schedule of the supporting task, and sends a reminder when a scheduled date of supporting task completion is within a predetermined time period of a current date. However, the claim handling system of Stier et al. is concerned with managing the backlog of pending knowledge objects to resolve claims (col. 53, lines 39-48) and creates reports tracking weekly progress of pending claims (col. 53, lines 25-37). At the time of the invention, it would have been obvious to a person of ordinary skill in the art for the system of Stier et al. to set a schedule for a task to process a claim and send a reminder of the scheduled task because doing so would aid in the backlog management of pending claims as it would ensure that engineers process the claims in a timely fashion, which would shrink the backlog of pending claims, thus making the overall claim handling process more efficient.

As per claim 9, Stier et al. does not expressly disclose reminders as addressed in the rejection of claim 8. Stier et al. does disclose a technical support server according

to claim 8, wherein, when an additional new claim is received that is similar to the new claim, the claim handling section attaches an additional new claim report corresponding to the additional new claim as a backup document (col. 7, line 61-col. 8, line 6; col. 12, lines 16-24; The knowledge base links records together.).

As per claim 12, Stier et al. does not expressly disclose a technical support server according to claim 1, wherein the claim handling section has a table for recognizing different model numbers, corresponding to different market regions, that are assigned to a product model corresponding to the new claim. However, Stier et al. does disclose maintaining product-specific record types for each claim (col. 8, lines 54-56; col. 13, lines 33-35) and allowing the agent to enter the particular product that is associated with the claim in the claim description (col. 13, lines 42-46). Stier et al. further discloses the importance of standardizing data within the knowledge base (col. 9, lines 49-51). At the time of the invention, it would have been obvious to a person of ordinary skill in the art for the system of Stier et al. to recognize different model numbers associated with products for each new claim since Stier et al. already has the functionality to receive as input from a drop-down menu (i.e., from a table) the product-specific record types for each claim and also receives as input the identity of the specific product associated with the claim. Thus, a table identifying the product associated with the claim by product model number would facilitate the inputting of the claim information from an agent while ensuring data consistency within the system, which is a stated goal of Stier et al. (col. 9, lines 49-51).

Claims 22, 30, 31, 34 and 37 have substantially similar limitations to claims 8, 9, 12 and 15 above. Therefore, claims 22, 30, 31, 34 and 37 are rejected on the same basis as claims 8, 9, 12 and 15 above.

Response to Arguments

8. Applicant's arguments with regard to the amended claims are moot in view of the new grounds of rejections and have been addressed in the written analysis in the rejections.

Conclusion

9. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to C. Michelle Tarae (formerly, C. Michelle Colon) whose telephone number is 571-272-6727. The examiner can normally be reached Monday – Friday from 8:30am to 5:30pm.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Tariq Hafiz, can be reached at 571-272-6729.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should

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you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

Any response to this action should be mailed to:

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December 26, 2005

Romain Jeanty
Primary Examiner
Art Unit 3623